



GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE CABINET

Prepared for Governor Eric J. Holcomb and the Indiana General Assembly

Recommendations to Tackle Employer Talent Challenges and Accelerate the State's Economy



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November 18, 2022

Letter to the Governor and Indiana General Assembly

To the Honorable Eric J. Holcomb, Governor, and the Indiana General Assembly -

The workforce and education challenges Indiana is experiencing have been well-stated. The state is at a serious inflection point. The Cabinet is uniquely positioned to focus on the solutions to these problems, given not only the makeup of this body, but the mission you charged it with in 2018.

The employers on the Cabinet took charge and have spent nearly five months leading passionate, knowledgeable and highly engaged colleagues from around the state in various working groups, to develop a set of recommendations to tackle employer talent challenges and accelerate the state's economy.

What follows are priority recommendations to:

- help employers find workers and develop a skilled talent pipeline;
- remove barriers keeping people out of the labor force; and
- prepare Indiana's future workforce.

Collaboration has never been better – state agencies, industry, education, community and philanthropic partners are working together more than ever before. One of the consistent refrains of the Cabinet throughout this project was, “Think globally, plan regionally, act locally.” These solutions are for the state – urban, rural and everywhere in between.

Together we have a rare opportunity to accelerate Indiana's economy and digital development, and to leapfrog other states in the national and global race for talent and economic progress. Inaction will leave Hoosiers in the digital dust.

The Cabinet encourages you to think big and bold, with purpose, laser sharp focus and a sense of urgency. Now is the time to transform Indiana and truly take our state to the Next Level. Thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully, in service -



Ryan Kitchell, Chair,
Governor's Workforce Cabinet



Whitney Ertel, Executive Director,
Governor's Workforce Cabinet



Executive Overview

In today's state of the workforce, there is no shortage of reports, news and firsthand feedback detailing the challenges and concerns. Indiana is facing an inflection point regarding its people, economy and the future.

The state was facing significant workforce issues even before Covid-19: lagging wages, a tight labor market, declining education rates and an aging population, to name a few. Indiana's GDP per capita was well below the national average and there was a growing gap between employers' needs and the availability of workers with the appropriate skillset and education for the jobs available.

The pandemic set in and ravaged an already confusing and fraught workforce system. Women left the workforce in record numbers to care for children and loved ones. Older workers hastened their retirement. Traditional employees seeking flexibility moved into "gig" work (think Uber drivers and grocery delivery). The value of education faced more scrutiny, with fewer people going on to college or training after high school. The attention span of students and learning styles were drastically affected and last year alone, 11,000 high school seniors dropped out before graduation.

Faced with workforce shortages, many employers accelerated development of digital technologies to bolster production, processes and boost efficiencies. As employers

look for the skills and education to fuel growth, there is a fundamental mismatch between employers' demand and the people prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The urgency for training a technically skilled labor force has never been more apparent. The skills, knowledge and abilities required in today's world necessitate a more educated workforce, not less.

The recommendations that follow are presented in three areas: 1) Helping Employers Find Skilled Workers, 2) Removing Barriers for Workers and 3) Preparing Future Skilled Workers. This collection is the work of statewide Cabinet members and is based on many hours of collaboration, interviews with subject matter experts and review of programs, outcomes and best practices both locally and nationally.

What is apparent: Indiana is at a critical moment. The world around us changing. Doing more of the same will not serve Hoosiers well. Indiana must focus time, resources and effort and move swiftly. By doing so, the state's economy will advance, employers will transform and grow their businesses and Hoosiers will have a better quality of life. This type of opportunity does not present itself often. Indiana can not only make up ground, but also advance beyond other states and become a national leader.

Helping Employers Find Skilled Workers

Recommendations to ensure employers have the talent needed for the economy of today and tomorrow.

1. Accelerate Digital Development in Indiana
2. Create the Indiana Talent Agency
3. Develop a Career Navigation Network
4. Prepare Workers with Digital Skills Training
5. Incentivize College Graduation Rates for Key Degrees
6. Incentivize Colleges for In-State Retention
7. Bolster STEM Development via IU/Purdue Realignment
8. Define Work-Based Learning and Build a Work-Based Learning Student-Employer Connector Model
9. Scale Indiana's Next Level Programs of Study
10. Advocate for Employment-Based Immigration Reform

Removing Barriers for Workers

Recommendations to meet Hoosiers where they are and help remove obstacles to work and learning.

11. Provide Monetary Support to Remove Student Barriers
12. Expand Transportation Options for Working Youth
13. Increase Access to Early Learning Services
14. Increase Adult Education Funding and Launch Unemployment Insurance Bonus
15. Increase Employers Offering On-Site Education and Training
16. Simplify and Automate the Expungement Process
17. Auto-Enroll Financially Eligible Students in 21st Century Scholars
18. Require High School Students to File the FAFSA
19. Restore Frank O'Bannon Grant Funding to Pre-Recession Levels
20. Increase Acceptance of Credit for Prior Learning



Preparing Future Skilled Workers

Recommendations to ensure Indiana can deliver the training and skills needed for a modern workforce.

21. Rethink High School by Increasing Diploma Flexibility
22. Increase Access to Credentials of Value
23. Incentivize Completion of Credentials of Value in High School
24. Increase Access to High-Quality STEM Curriculum and Opportunities
25. Strengthen the Educator Pipeline in STEM-Related Subjects
26. Focus Early Childhood Education Programs on Educational Results
27. Increase Kindergarten Readiness by Establishing a Dolly Parton Library of Indiana
28. Ensure Students Can Read by the End of Third Grade
29. Award “Second Year” of College to High School Dual Credit/Certificate Completers
30. Ensure a Stackable Credential Attainment System



A smiling man in a dark suit and tie is seated in a light-colored chair, looking towards the camera. In the foreground, the back of another person's head is visible, looking towards the man. The background is a blurred office setting with bookshelves. A large yellow triangle is on the left side of the page.

Helping Employers Find Skilled Workers

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet recommends strategies to ensure employers have the talent needed for the economy of today and tomorrow.



Helping Employers Find Skilled Workers

1 | ACCELERATE DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIANA

Indiana faces a defining moment as it contemplates the future of work and the state's economy. The world is being transformed overnight, and Indiana must accelerate its digital development to thrive. **The Cabinet recommends Indiana leaders urgently promote faster and broader adoption of digital technologies and equip more workers with the skills required.**

Research conducted by the Brookings Institution for the Indiana GPS (“Growth to Prosperity in our State”) Project emphasizes the importance of technology adoption as a “powerful driver of dynamism across the whole economy—not just in ‘tech,’ but in firms, for workers and for households.” Embracing technology is one of the best ways to increase essential productivity, generate quality jobs and open opportunities for new prosperity. Brookings also concludes that nearly one-third of Indiana jobs are now highly susceptible to automation — the highest share in the country. Employers will replace these jobs with a mix of technology and more skilled workers.

Semiconductor (chips) manufacturing will dominate the economy for the foreseeable future. Indiana has an opportunity to become a high-tech hotspot and national leader. There is an unprecedented amount of federal money that will be awarded to states that are home to semiconductor manufacturing, which demands workers with the digital skills that these jobs require.

Indiana's key to success is proactive, assertive state leadership on digital-economy issues. Existing and emerging leaders must serve as trailblazers. Considerations include the creation of a Digital Indiana Readiness Grant, parallel to the existing Manufacturing Readiness Grant, but focused entirely on digital adoption, to stimulate regional employer, sector-based efforts. The economic gains of becoming a more digitally based economy will be a draw for businesses and top talent in Indiana and will deliver large returns on investment.

2. | CREATE THE INDIANA TALENT AGENCY

Indiana's talent development system must be responsive to the needs of employers, able to innovate and provide real-time solutions to complex and pressing problems. To provide Indiana employers with a much needed "front door" to the talent ecosystem, **the Cabinet recommends the creation of the Indiana Talent Agency – a one-stop, statewide service for strategic "high value, high wage" employers and industries that are key to Indiana's current and future economy, led by the Department of Workforce Development.**

The Indiana Talent Agency will work with key employers to determine their hiring needs, the skills and competencies associated with those jobs and then select the appropriate "talent developers." This approach will operate with the focus of providing quick response, customized training for a modern, rapidly changing, digital economy, and will connect education and training partners to be responsive to employer needs. Under this system, employers will have a partner to help efficiently and effectively meet their talent needs. Talent development pipelines will include community colleges, post-secondary institutions, work-based learning programs, training providers, adult learning centers and more.

It is also recognized that in this rapidly changing economy, companies need to upskill and reskill their current workforce.

The Indiana Talent Agency will assist with the coordination and connection of providers based on a company's needs. The team will connect employers to education and training providers to identify high demand, high wage opportunities across skill levels, including credential-based training that can be sourced and scaled to meet emerging industry needs. Creating collaborative talent pipelines, responsive to innovation for next-generation industry needs, such as semiconductor and microelectronics, will be crucial.

The Cabinet also recommends review of the employer engagement, workforce development and unemployment insurance functions to ensure these services have the dedicated support and resources to remain focused, stable and competitive. Clear division of these key functions would insulate operations that are typically prone to disruption by external factors. The responsibilities associated with each of these divisions require more than a single leader and team. Workforce development and unemployment insurance already exist. The employer engagement function needs to be built, scaled and operating at the speed of today's business. This is a great opportunity to review the operating structure, separate the functions if deemed necessary and enable these core services to remain buoyant, fully-staffed and responsive during good times and bad.

3. | DEVELOP A CAREER NAVIGATION NETWORK

The Cabinet recommends Indiana develop a network of approved intermediaries, which may include staffing agencies and employers, which are dedicated to early career navigation and job connections for high school students. High school students would be required to meet with an approved agency or employer during their sophomore, junior and senior years. The intermediaries will provide students with early career exposure and advise students on various industries, current and future demand, career options, associated training and help with job placement.

This constant support over the course of three years will help students determine a path forward so that no one is graduating high school without a plan or a connection to a local employer. This model could also be scaled to serve other groups.

4. | PREPARE WORKERS WITH DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING

Regardless of the industry, technology is having an impact on how all 3 million-plus Hoosiers work. **The Cabinet recommends increasing funding for the Next Level Jobs “Workforce Ready Grant” to train Hoosiers for digital workplace needs.**

To ensure that all workers are prepared for the skills needed in a digitally based economy, the Workforce Ready Grant and Employer Training Grant should receive additional funding to prepare Indiana-based workers the opportunity to receive additional training to prepare for the jobs of the future. Digital, tech-infused curricula through approved Next Level Jobs training providers as well as identified advanced industry certificate programs should be made available for Hoosiers through the Workforce Ready Grant. Equally, the Next Level Jobs Employer Training Grant should also give priority to STEM-based (includes digital and computer science focused) employer training programs to support Indiana’s digital workforce readiness. By 2030, occupation projections indicate Indiana will have 172,000 total STEM openings to fill.

5. | INCENTIVIZE COLLEGE GRADUATION RATES FOR KEY DEGREES

Indiana’s education system and employers must work together to ensure today’s students are aware of, prepared for, and driven toward occupations that meet the state’s most critical needs. **The Cabinet recommends incentivizing colleges based on the number of graduates with key degrees to fill occupations most needed by the state’s current and future industry.** Occupations might include those related to computer science, math, technology and engineering. A group of key state agencies, employers and industry partners would identify the key occupations based on existing and growing industries and the companies the state desires to attract.

6. | INCENTIVIZE COLLEGES FOR IN-STATE RETENTION

The Cabinet recommends Indiana incentivize colleges for in-state retention of their graduates. This would be achieved through an adjustment to the postsecondary outcomes-based funding formula to include a performance measure for the number of graduates who stay and work in Indiana. This recommendation would encourage colleges to adjust their career planning efforts to emphasize Indiana as a destination for their graduates and ultimately, help more graduates commit to living and working in Indiana.

7. | BOLSTER STEM DEVELOPMENT VIA IU/PURDUE REALIGNMENT

Indiana's economic growth is currently limited by the capabilities and availability of individuals in middle to high-skilled jobs. The jobs of today and tomorrow require higher levels of critical and creative thinking, to foster innovation and encourage continual growth. If Indiana is to succeed in the modern economy, it must be the right place for Hoosiers, educators and businesses to thrive.

Earlier this year, Indiana University and Purdue University initiated strategic and collaborative steps to reimagine the potential for higher education and research in Indianapolis. **The Cabinet is confident the vision being contemplated will provide transformative opportunities. The Cabinet encourages Indiana University and Purdue University to set a bold 50-year Indianapolis strategy with locations providing plenty of room for unlimited**

growth. The Cabinet encourages government and philanthropic partners to fully resource this once-in-a-generation opportunity. Aggressive but complimentary and coordinated investments by both institutions will be required for optimal impact.

Recent announcements from new companies locating in Indiana, as well as existing employers, stress the importance and need for more STEM graduates in Indiana. The opportunity for IU and Purdue to reimagine location, space and collaboration hubs will have a direct impact on strategic STEM education and research in Indiana and the availability of graduates in these high-demand fields. By creating the vision and space now, Indiana will be able to realize more graduates for the high demand, high tech jobs of the future.

8. | DEFINE WORK-BASED LEARNING AND BUILD A WORK-BASED LEARNING STUDENT-EMPLOYER CONNECTOR MODEL

Work-based learning provides students with opportunities for skill development, career exposure and the ability to earn income. These experiences are key to building intentional, early connections between employers and future prospective workers. These relationships can help bridge the skilled labor gap and improve state talent retention.

Indiana's many education and training providers, employers and partners do not have a shared definition of work-based learning, which is urgently needed in order to understand the landscape and drive future change. **The Cabinet recommends key partners work together to develop a shared definition of work-based learning.**

Shared understanding and defined terms will help ensure consistency, offerings and measurable outcomes.

The Cabinet recommends building a high-quality work-based learning model with key connectors, to support intentional student, school and employer connections and participation. Connectors can serve as intermediaries that set up high quality work-based learning programs that would help simplify the process for employers, schools and students. These programs are key to providing early connections for students and employers, and could also lead to seamless, full-time employment following graduation for those students not pursuing postsecondary studies.



9. | SCALE INDIANA'S NEXT LEVEL PROGRAMS OF STUDY

Indiana has been improving its career and technical education system as a key strategy for ensuring Hoosier students acquire the skills needed to fill roles in high-demand, high-wage industries and meet employer needs. Secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses were recently redesigned as Indiana's Next Level Programs of Study, and 65 industry-aligned, streamlined programs of study are now available. These programs span 16 career clusters including business, information technology and healthcare.

This makes participation in career and technical education more relevant and increases opportunities for students to earn dual credits, certifications and ultimately credentials of value while in high school.

The Cabinet recommends continued state investment in secondary career and technical education (CTE) and recommends the following actions to scale Indiana's Next Level Programs of Study, including:

- Identify additional funding sources and/or increase state funding for high school industry certification exams to help remove cost barriers for CTE students.
- Expand the Education Readiness Grants to help schools secure the equipment necessary to offer a Next Level Program of Study. (The first year of this grant was a partnership between Conexus Indiana and the Office of CTE, with grant funding going to schools interested in offering the Industry 4.0 – Smart Manufacturing program of study.)
- Identify solutions for more schools and career centers to be able to offer courses for dual credit and/or dual enrollment, as outlined in the “Launch Dual Credit Expansion Initiative” in recommendation #29.
- Maintain current state CTE funding for course enrollments in secondary programs of study. Direct the Office of CTE to develop enhanced monitoring practices to ensure the quality of CTE programs and an overall greater return on investment of CTE funding.

10. | ADVOCATE FOR EMPLOYMENT-BASED IMMIGRATION REFORM

The Cabinet encourages state leaders to champion Congress for employment-based immigration reform to support the global economic competitiveness of Indiana. Workers with advanced education and technical training in digitally-based STEM fields will propel the state's future economy.

Indiana added just 20,341 residents in 2021, to reach a total population of nearly 6.81 million, according to the latest population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau (net migration accounted for 19,000 new residents and the difference between deaths and births was 690). According to the Indiana Business Research Center, Indiana's 2021

population change is the smallest annual increase since 2015. It is also one-third less than the state's average gain of nearly 30,200 residents annually over the previous decade.

Indiana will need to supplement its labor force through net domestic migration and employment-based foreign immigration as birth rates decline and Indiana's baby boomers age out of the workforce. Indiana will need to take a three-pronged approach to meet employer demand for STEM-based workers and fuel continued innovation. This includes advancing resident worker skills, retaining college graduates and opening doors for global talent pipelines.





Removing Barriers for Workers

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet recommends strategies to meet Hoosiers where they are and help remove obstacles to work and learning.



Removing Barriers for Workers

11. | PROVIDE MONETARY SUPPORT TO REMOVE STUDENT BARRIERS

The Cabinet recommends Indiana provide monetary support through an opportunity grant for every Hoosier high school student.

This student-centered fund may be used for:

- Career coaching
- Transportation costs
- Interview and work clothing
- Dual enrollment costs
- College and career advising support and other approved needs related to education, training, career preparedness and job placement.

12. | EXPAND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR WORKING YOUTH

Safe, reliable and accessible transportation for individuals ages 16 to 20 is a challenge. At this critical stage of development, young adults – including high school students – may want to participate in a work-study program or apprenticeship but may not have reliable transportation to a job for any number of reasons.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana consider specialized licenses and monitoring for individuals who could be eligible to transport youth to expand the network of transportation providers. Possible solutions include:

- Explore partnerships between school systems and employers who train or employ students. For example, school bus drivers have an endorsement on their license to show they can operate such vehicles. IC 20-27-8 outlines the standards for school bus drivers. The Central Indiana Regional Transit Authority's Commuter Connect hosts carpool and vanpool programs and benefits hundreds of participating employers in the region.
- Provide funding through opportunity grants (Recommendation #11) which may include:
 - ✓ Rideshare scooters and bicycles for students that are near their place of employment.
 - ✓ For areas where a commercial rideshare system is unavailable, communities could develop and deploy bike share programs.
 - ✓ Loaner vehicles for students to borrow could be provided by local municipalities and located on school grounds. Programs like Zipcar are available on college campuses for student use within a certain radius.

A business-focused model also exists, where employees can sign up as drivers and utilize the existing fleet of vehicles for business travel and related activities.

- Provide reimbursement for individuals in the community that provide rides for students. Communities and/or school systems can register eligible drivers and utilize the federal reimbursement rate, calculated and published by the IRS, to compensate individuals who typically provide these informal services for free. In Indiana, family members or associates of traditional Medicaid members can be reimbursed for transporting the member to and from scheduled medical appointments.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana enhance existing supports and programs for transportation needs, by increasing the state funding needed to complement federal funds provided by the 5311 and related formulas. Section 5311 grant opportunities through the Indiana Department of Transportation, also known as Formula Grants for Rural Areas, is a federal program that provides funding for communities with populations of 50,000 or fewer individuals to assess, operate, and expand rural and intercity transit services. Several recipients have demonstrated success in providing transportation to various populations within their communities, including youth in this age category.

13. | INCREASE ACCESS TO EARLY LEARNING SERVICES

The average cost of a year of high-quality childcare is more than annual tuition and fees at a state university. The primary mechanism for very low-income families to offset these costs is through Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers, which support working parents or those in training programs. At 127% of the federal poverty level, Indiana has one of the lowest income eligibility caps on CCDF vouchers in the country. With limited exception, Indiana's state administered On My Way Pre-Kindergarten program follows this same eligibility standard. A family of four can currently access these subsidies if they earn less than \$33,300 annually or just under \$650 per week. Too often, Hoosier workers gain or improve employment only to be kept out of the labor force by the cost of childcare. Indeed, Indiana's labor force participation rate for women with young children is down three percentage points since before the pandemic and for single mothers, the rate is down six percentage points.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana increase the income eligibility limit for Child Care and Development Fund and On My Way Pre-K vouchers to 185% of the federal poverty level to improve access to childcare for low-income working families. The recent Build, Learn, Grow scholarship program demonstrated that higher income eligibility limits were an effective support for working families with young children. Modeling that successful initiative, which included a transparent graduated scale establishing the family's share of childcare costs based on income, the Family and Social Services Administration should immediately raise income eligibility levels to ensure the efficient expenditure of available state and federal funding. FSSA should monitor

waitlists for both early learning subsidy programs and report out annually on the extent to which demand outpaces available funding.

While childcare affordability is a challenge, there is also a significant lack of supply of quality workers for childcare centers constraining supply. Existing licensing requirements eliminate a potential population to help combat the shortage areas. These requirements negatively impact provider ratios and availability for families and contribute to staffing challenges for childcare centers. Lack of trusted childcare options and availability in turn affect a parent's ability to work. The current requirements also prohibit the opportunity for students to work in a childcare setting and gain valuable exposure and work experience. And ultimately, thousands of Hoosier children are missing out on high-quality, early learning experiences.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana revise the age requirements for young adults working in childcare facilities to address immediate constraints on early childhood education capacity. There is an urgent need to augment the early learning talent pipeline, which would have a positive effect on a parent's ability to return to the labor market.

Recommended revisions to current licensing (470 IAC 3-4.7-24) include:

- Reduction of the age requirement for employees working in a childcare center to 16
- Adjustment to requirements of workers 21 or older for care in the infant and toddler areas
- Replacement of the high school degree requirement with a skills-based training/assessment



It is important to note that this is not a quality tradeoff. To ensure this added flexibility does not undermine the State's goals of providing high-quality early learning settings, employees would be required to:

- Pass a competency-based assessment, to exhibit their knowledge of early childhood practices, prior to serving in a childcare setting
- Pass a background check conducted prior to employment and pass safety checks throughout the year
- Not be left alone in ratio without an adult present

The Cabinet recommends Indiana take immediate steps to increase the supply of early childhood educators. Indiana will not have future generations of a quality workforce without focusing on early childhood education today, and that requires an increased supply of high-quality early childhood educators. The Cabinet recommends the State implement and encourage new workforce training models

(e.g., competency-based credentials and pathways, including CTE in high school, for career entry and advancement, portable and stackable credentials, apprenticeships, regional sector-based job-embedded training) designed to increase recruitment and retention of early childhood educators. Where government is not the direct funder, the State could utilize tax credits and matching workforce funds or other incentives to support recruitment and competitive compensation and working conditions for effective early childhood education providers.

The Cabinet anticipates these changes would dramatically improve the talent pipeline for staffing at childcare facilities, provide greater employment of the under 18 population and quality work-based learning experiences, ensure access to high-quality early learning opportunities are available to more Hoosier children and foster a positive impact on the ability of parents to return to the workforce.

14. | INCREASE ADULT EDUCATION FUNDING AND LAUNCH UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BONUS

Approximately 432,000 adult Hoosiers lack a high school diploma or its equivalency (HSE). Hoosiers without a high school diploma or equivalency have a labor force participation rate of only 42% vs. 57% for those with a high school degree/equivalency and 65% for those with some college. Those without a high school degree or equivalency are much more likely to be living in poverty – comprising approximately 282,000 of Indiana’s SNAP/TANF/Medicaid recipients and suffering an infant mortality rate twice that of college graduate families.

It is imperative that Indiana address this challenge from every possible angle and better link these adult education students to employers while they are studying and/or as they graduate. The increase in earnings for individuals who complete an HSE is approximately \$8,400 per year.

Last year, state adult education programs helped approximately 5,542 people earn their high school degree or equivalent. But at the same time, just over 11,000 high school seniors didn’t graduate. The numbers are clearly trending in the wrong direction.

To combat this issue, **the Cabinet recommends significant and immediate funding increases to Indiana’s key adult education programs** – Indiana Adult Education through DWD, Adult Charter High Schools and the Workforce Diploma Reimbursement Program through GWC. These programs serve slightly different audiences, have shown success and have Hoosiers waitlisted due to capacity and funding limitations.

The Cabinet also recommends modernizing use of these funds, allowing state adult education funds to be spent in the same manner as federal funds so that a component for adult digital and computer literacy can be incorporated, and integrated education and training on-site be included. The Cabinet also supports the request for a second HSE competency-based assessment.

In addition, the Cabinet recommends a legislative appropriation to provide a cash incentive (in conjunction with unemployment benefits) to those that make weekly progress toward completion of their high school equivalency. Through Indiana Adult Education, the individual could also work toward a credential at the same time. Instead of balanced weekly stipend payments, the claimant would be paid a bonus upon enrollment and first meeting completion, paid a (lower) weekly stipend, receive additional payments with completion and passing of monthly program assessments and then receive a final payment/bonus at completion to incentivize early/timely completion (UI can be paid for up to 26 weeks for eligible recipients). Based on recent UI claims, there are thousands of unique UI claimants per month without a high school diploma or HSE.

Indiana has an opportunity to incentivize this population to earn their HSE and be equipped for additional workforce opportunities. This effort is scalable with increased funding. All graduates would be connected to potential employers upon completion of their HSE, with the expectation that claimants experience a wage gain of \$8,000 annually and have a 90% employment rate six months post completion.



15. | INCREASE EMPLOYERS OFFERING ON-SITE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

One of the biggest challenges with adult education is the structure of traditional training programs, which does not meet many adults where they are most – at their place of employment. Many Hoosiers must prioritize work because they cannot take a reduction in pay or reduce their hours to attend classes, even if it would mean higher wages in the longer term. In addition, many adults lack the cash upfront to cover tuition costs, even if their employer offers tuition reimbursement.

To overcome this challenge, the Cabinet recommends “meeting people where they are” by supporting and scaling customized employer partnerships for training and learning in the workplace. This allows individuals to continue to work while taking classes — at work — without sacrificing pay. On-site employer education opportunities can take many forms, such as high school diploma or equivalency completion, English language skills training and postsecondary degree completion. Adult Education’s digital literacy programming can lift individuals vulnerable to achievement gaps in a rapidly changing economy while developing the talent employers need.

The Cabinet recommends more employers begin offering education and training programs at the worksite. Innovations in employer-paid education, such as the Ivy Tech Community

College, Indiana Chamber of Commerce and employer collaboration “Achieve your Degree” program, have resulted in credential and college attainment.

Through Achieve Your Degree, Ivy Tech assists students with the college and financial aid application process and defers billing until the end of the semester, ensuring students take advantage of any financial aid opportunities for which they qualify. Companies that offer tuition benefits to their employees then cover the balance, per company policy. Some employers require programs of study to be in certain areas relevant to their area of work, while others open it completely. Achieve Your Degree has been used by approximately 300 employers with thousands of adults earning credentials.

Indiana employers like Cook Group are creating their own programming. My Cook Pathway offers Cook Group employees with free education and training to earn anything from their high school diploma to a master’s degree, the ability to work part-time and complete schooling in the afternoon (all while being paid full-time), reading and literacy programming and more. Purdue Global, Old National Bank and Goodwill Excel have also partnered and developed similar models to support their workforce through access to education and training opportunities.



The Cabinet recommends more employers join or model programming after Achieve Your Degree and My Cook Pathway and consider providing the following to their employees:

- Partnerships with local providers or on-site education and training opportunities for employees, allowing advancement at the place of business
- Upfront tuition reimbursement to employees or joining the Achieve Your Degree program to defer payment to the end of the term
- Financial advising on education and training opportunities at the place of business
- Encouragement to employees enrolled in education programs to complete the FAFSA annually
- Partnership with Indiana Adult Education to provide basic skills deficiency training

While Indiana needs more employers to offer these solutions to their employees, the state must ensure there is adequate funding and support for current providers. Right now, more than 150 employers are on a waitlist for Indiana Adult Education or English Language Learner classes. Increased funding would immediately open this pipeline for training, as outlined in Recommendation #14.

Indiana may also consider a grant opportunity for employers looking to scale or develop models like Achieve Your Degree and My Cook Pathway designed to educate and train their existing and incumbent workforce. To simplify access to these funds, the State should consider the development of a centralized portal or resource catalog for higher education institutions, employers and employees seeking these services.

16. | SIMPLIFY AND AUTOMATE THE EXPUNGEMENT PROCESS

There is ample evidence to demonstrate the significant and negative impact a criminal background has on labor participation. Someone with a misdemeanor can file a petition for expungement and follow a process to get their record expunged after five years. With misdemeanor convictions, the county prosecutor's office cannot statutorily object. Once the petition is received by the court, the expungement should be automatically granted by the judge. This process costs approximately \$3,000, likely requires the services or advice of an attorney and takes approximately six months to complete. This is out of reach for many Hoosiers and creates a further divide between those who have financial means and resources and those who do not.

For those who cannot afford these costs, the misdemeanor remains on their record and can negatively impact their ability to get a job interview, call backs and ultimately, steady employment.

In 2020, 45.1% of new criminal charges were misdemeanors. This translates to approximately 113,451 new misdemeanor cases in 2021 alone. Data suggest the process to expunge itself is the primary barrier to individuals who lack the means or ability to navigate the process.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana take active steps to simplify and automate the expungement process. Recent legislation effective July 1, 2022 (IC 35-38-9) expands the eligibility for expungements, including misdemeanor expungements (IC 35-38-9-3) and certain lower-level felony expungements (IC 35-38-9-4) and is a positive step forward for individuals engaged with the justice system. When an individual is being released from incarceration, if their offense is eligible for expungement, they can sign a document declaring their desire to have the offense removed from their record "automatically" after the required amount of time has elapsed, but they must still file a petition with a local court of jurisdiction.

An avenue to build on this progress would be to explore simplification of the process to obtain record expungement for eligible offenses. Eliminate the "process" of filing the petition/paperwork, paying fees, etc., at the five-year mark - for example, have the county clerk flag each eligible misdemeanor case number to be placed on an expungement list at the five-year mark. At the time of eligible expungement, the clerk's office could run the offender's criminal history, and if no additional convictions have been recorded, the case number would be presented to the judge for a "rubber stamped" expungement.



17. | AUTO-ENROLL FINANCIALLY ELIGIBLE STUDENTS IN 21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS

Despite Indiana's efforts to provide top-notch financial opportunities for students (Indiana is ranked first in the Midwest and fifth in the nation in offering need-based financial aid), one of the key challenges Indiana faces today when encouraging students to enroll in postsecondary education and training programs is affordability.

Indiana has a proven program that demonstrates the positive impact of state financial aid – 21st Century Scholars, Indiana's early college promise program. The Scholars program offers income-eligible Hoosier students up to four years of paid tuition at an eligible Indiana college or university after they graduate from high school. Currently students must enroll in seventh or eighth grade, and in high school they participate in the Scholar Success Program (SSP), a series of 12 tasks, three per year of high school, designed to help prepare them for college. 21st Century Scholars are almost three times as likely to go to college, be college-ready (including taking and earning dual credit or Advanced Placement courses while in

high school) and complete their degree, compared to their low-income peers. But while the impact of the 21st Century Scholars program is significant, fewer than half of eligible students enroll each year.

The Cabinet supports the Commission for Higher Education's goal to auto-enroll all financially eligible students in the 21st Century Scholars program. Auto-enrolling Indiana's financially eligible students (with an opt-out provision) would increase the number of students participating and addresses concerns of affordability, particularly for low-income students. It will also free up resources currently used on recruitment for Scholar enrollment. Expanding this premier program will increase in cost over time but the Commission for Higher Education estimates that this investment in the state's workforce will ultimately pay for itself in multiples through increases in wages, net worth, tax receipts and lower social program costs.



18. | REQUIRE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS TO FILE THE FAFSA

To receive financial aid, students must fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) each year. However, many students do not file it or do not file it on time, often missing out on funding from the state, as well as private entities, for that academic year. The National College Attainment Network estimates that Hoosier students left more than \$65 million in Pell Grants dollars on the table in 2021. Students and their families cannot know how much they will have to pay for college, or how much aid may be available to them, until they submit the FAFSA.

The Cabinet recommends continued consideration of the requirement - with an opt-out provision - that high school

seniors must file the FAFSA before graduating. Many states including Alabama, Louisiana and Texas, have implemented a FAFSA (or comparable state aid form) completion requirement and dozens of others are considering such a requirement. Indiana should consider providing incremental funding to high schools for advising staff required to support this process. The cost of advising staff to support increased use of FAFSA could be paid for by leveraging more federal dollars. Indiana should also expand engagement to business to support parental FAFSA completion (such as banks, tax offices, etc.) and work with community partners to increase FAFSA awareness and completion

19. | RESTORE FRANK O'BANNON GRANT FUNDING TO PRE-RECESSION LEVELS

The Frank O'Bannon Grant annually helps more than 30,000 Hoosiers afford postsecondary education. This grant program helps lower- and middle-income students not reached by the 21st Century Scholars program, afford college. The grant is available to students attending both public and private colleges. Although the Frank O'Bannon Grant provides generous aid, the program was cut significantly during the Great Recession and amounts have yet to recover.

The Cabinet supports the Commission for Higher Education's goal to increase the maximum O'Bannon Grant award by 35% to bring the award back to 2008-09 levels (when adjusting for inflation). This will serve as both an affordability measure for students enrolled for the upcoming year and beyond, as an outreach and recruitment tool for students considering enrollment.

20. | INCREASE ACCEPTANCE OF CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) allows institutions to capture and award college credit for student experience and apply that credit to their degree program. This removes duplication of instructional content that students already have mastered, which is the case for many working adults with life and work experiences that can and should be counted toward their degree. This process, however, is not widely utilized, standardized or accepted across all public institutions. Two additional years in college can cost \$50,000 or more in lost wages, tuition and related costs. Additionally, every year students extend the term of completing their college degree program decreases their chances of graduating. The most expensive proposition for a student is debt with no degree or credential to show for

it. Some 350,000 Hoosiers have been to college but never earned a certificate or degree.

The Cabinet recommends additional support to higher education institutions to expand the use of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) throughout public colleges to enhance the number of adults choosing to attend college. As students will likely attend more than one institution during their lives, institutions would be encouraged to accept Credit for Prior Learning granted from other public institutions. The State should consider a grant opportunity to scale and increase institutional staff/support for Credit for Prior Learning portfolio review and to build a more systematic, transferable system for prior learning credit.



Preparing Future Skilled Workers

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet recommends strategies to deliver the training and skills needed for a modern workforce.



PREPARING FUTURE SKILLED WORKERS

21. | RETHINK HIGH SCHOOL BY INCREASING DIPLOMA FLEXIBILITY

To increase the number of Hoosiers with some form of education beyond a high school diploma, Indiana must rethink the four years students are enrolled in high school to be more intentional and maximize this time for the student's benefit. This includes ensuring Hoosier high school students have access to:

- Essential knowledge and skill development
- Career experiences
- High-quality work-based learning opportunities
- Coursework leading to credentials of value before high school graduation

Indiana's high school diplomas should be specifically designed to address these needs and offer flexibility for students to explore the best path for their life. **The Cabinet recommends that the Department of Education revise the high school diploma allowing additional flexibility around course requirements.** This will allow students to engage in learning that is relevant to their future careers and more closely aligned to their postsecondary interests.



22. | INCREASE ACCESS TO CREDENTIALS OF VALUE

To support Indiana's current and future economy, additional support should be made available to Indiana's high schools and training providers to scale efforts that increase intentional early college credit opportunities that lead to more students earning a credential of value – and completing a quality work-based learning experience (as referenced in Recommendation #8).

The Cabinet recommends Indiana launch a dual credit expansion initiative specifically aimed at increasing completion of credentials of value. Data show that students who earn dual credit or Advanced Placement are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education programs and succeed in completion. Dual credit also reduces the cost of and accelerates credential completion.

The Indiana College Core – a block of 30 general education credits that transfers to any Indiana public university (and some private colleges) upon completion – is one of Indiana's best tools for saving students and families money while also preparing students for college. Today, through dual credit and dual enrollment, roughly 2,000 high schoolers earn the Indiana College Core annually, and this number continues to grow. To maximize the benefit to Indiana students, the Cabinet recommends that all high schools be required to

provide a full catalog of Indiana College Core courses, a priority recommendation by the Commission for Higher Education. If schools are too small to offer certain courses, they should facilitate a partnership with other surrounding high schools or higher education institutions to offer online courses and/or share teachers.

In order to increase student access to high-quality dual credit opportunities, Indiana must support and incentivize educators to become certified dual credit teachers. The Cabinet recommends simplifying the process for certified high school or university instructors to teach dual credit and dual enrollment classes, as well as increasing the salary for educators who can award credits in these high-need areas.

The Cabinet recommends the General Assembly restore dual credit funding to the 2017 biennium amount of \$50 per dual credit hour earned by a student for credits that lead to credentials of value, as supported by the Indiana Dual Credit Advisory Council. The Cabinet also recommends the Department of Education and Commission for Higher Education complete a comprehensive review of the funding model(s) that support dual credit and provide recommendations to the General Assembly for improvements.



23. | INCENTIVIZE COMPLETION OF CREDENTIALS OF VALUE

Research shows a direct, positive link between a student's level of education and their quality of life, civic engagement, health, labor participation, employment, living wages and even life expectancy. While many students plan to continue their education after high school, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education reports that only 53% of Hoosier students from the class of 2020 pursued postsecondary education upon graduation.

Looking at the state's overall population, only 48.3% of Hoosiers have completed a postsecondary credential or high-value industry certification beyond high school, leaving Indiana short of achieving the state's goal of 60% of Hoosiers with a degree or credential beyond high-school. This elevates the urgency and significant opportunity to support students in accessing

intentional coursework allowing more students to graduate high school having already earned credentials of value.

The Cabinet recommends developing a statewide definition of “credentials of value” and incentivizing completion of these credentials while in high school. (The student's portion of the incentive would go into a 529 account and the school's incentive would be received in the form of a grant.) This definition should be based on current and future workforce demands, adopted across state agencies, and be eligible for incentives and programmatic funding (such as the Next Level Jobs “Workforce Ready Grant” and other relevant state programs). There should be a continued focus on equity and helping student populations which have historically lagged in completing credentials.

24. | INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY STEM CURRICULUM AND OPPORTUNITIES

Career opportunities in STEM sectors are projected to grow exponentially, making STEM education essential to meeting future workforce demands. Even if a student doesn't pursue a career in a STEM-related field, STEM education helps students learn skills that will serve them throughout life, including problem solving, critical thinking, communication and digital literacy.

Currently, Indiana students have varying and limited access to quality STEM curriculum, coursework, and out-of-school learning opportunities that will help students maximize this important knowledge and skill development, as well as STEM career exposure. Data also reveal persistent knowledge gaps for some student populations in STEM subjects.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana work to urgently increase access to high-quality, engaging STEM education curriculum and experiences – including computer science and digital literacy – that prepare students for the future. This includes supporting access to high-quality, engaging STEM education both inside and outside of the classroom by:

- Reimbursing schools for Indiana Department of Education-approved, high-quality STEM instructional materials and professional development
- Monitoring progress of quality STEM implementation in order better understand current student learning in STEM areas and where additional support may be needed
- Increasing access to quality out-of-school STEM programming through the creation of competitive grant opportunities
- Expanding work-based learning opportunities in STEM careers
- Increasing access to college and career advising for all students, helping to illuminate the range of STEM opportunities available to students after graduation, thereby ensuring students are engaging in appropriate coursework and other opportunities during the high school years to set them up for success beyond high school graduation
- Increasing the number of students completing digital literacy and computer science coursework
- Developing a foundational, fast-track course for all Indiana high school students that develops the student's necessary digital literacy foundation with exposure to career opportunities and fundamentals

25. | STRENGTHEN THE EDUCATOR PIPELINE IN STEM-RELATED SUBJECTS

To increase student access to high-quality STEM curriculum and experiences, Indiana must support and incentivize more Hoosiers to pursue a career in STEM education.

The Cabinet recommends providing financial incentives to encourage current and future educators to pursue licensure in STEM areas.

To build additional educator resources, Indiana should support collaborations between local K-12 schools, higher

education partners, and business and industry aimed at strengthening the educator pipeline, including “Grow Your Own” programs, which help current students pursue a career in teaching, with a goal of ultimately returning to the school in an educator role. This can also include recruiting industry employee experts to partner with schools in teaching certain STEM courses and supporting current educators in diversifying their licensure to include STEM subjects.





26. | FOCUS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS ON EDUCATIONAL RESULTS

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a core, existential function of workforce preparation and engagement. Done effectively, ECE provides parents, employees and employers with effective, affordable, safe and healthy environments for children to develop, learn and become ready for success in kindergarten, later education and life. ECE also provides an environment ripe for collaboration and partnership between state agencies, communities, employers, schools and providers to achieve the essential results needed.

Yet, Indiana's early childhood education system is complex, heavily regulated and costly, with multiple sources and layers of funding and obligation imposed on providers and users alike, producing both excess attention to regulatory compliance and inadequate capacity to deliver the essential result of readiness for success in kindergarten, K-12 and later education. The Department of Education and the Family and Social Services Administration, working with the Early Learning Advisory Committee, have made initial and constructive efforts to identify and consider means to address the complexities and resulting issues.

The status of the state's early childhood education may be summarized by inadequate education and access. Too many Hoosier children do not receive early childhood education that prepares them for success in kindergarten and later education and life. Hoosier workers cannot access affordable, reliable, and effective early childcare providers, denying them participation in the state's economy, while employers lose access to talent.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana's Early Childhood Education program put greater emphasis on providing results of early childhood learnings and outcomes. The State should evaluate and improve the Paths to Quality rating system for providers, with an eye to education, transparency and accountability.

In addition, the Cabinet recommends Indiana expand, revise and strengthen the definition, structure and rigor of "quality" Early Childhood Education (e.g., clear focus and primary emphasis on readiness for kindergarten, to increase provider effectiveness in achieving that result). Likewise, the Cabinet recommends Indiana build out and strengthen the Readiness Assessment System

The Cabinet also recommends eliminating the requirement of the On My Way Prekindergarten program that parents of participating children are working or otherwise demonstrate a need for service. As Indiana strengthens the educational outcomes of its Early Childhood Education program, it should ensure that its signature early learning program is centered around this education purpose. Unlike childcare programs that are appropriately restricted to working families, tying access to high-quality pre-kindergarten services to parent choices (working, pursuing a training program) risks undermining Indiana's long-term strategy to ensure kindergarten readiness.

27. | INCREASE KINDERGARTEN READINESS BY ESTABLISHING A DOLLY PARTON LIBRARY OF INDIANA

The Imagination Library is working with local affiliates and partners in 14 states (including Ohio and Kentucky) with the mission to inspire young children's love of reading. Each month, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails a high quality, age-appropriate book to all registered, birth to age five children, addressed to them, at no cost to the child's family.

The Cabinet recommends launching a statewide “Dolly

Parton Library of Indiana” to improve access to books, help inspire a love of reading and increase kindergarten readiness for Indiana’s over 400,000 birth to age five children. The project would be funded by a determined state contribution (a requirement of local programs participating in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library) along with gifts and grants from public and private sources and federal funds.





28. | ENSURE STUDENTS CAN READ BY THE END OF THIRD GRADE

Currently, one in five Indiana students do not achieve proficiency on IREAD-3, the statewide assessment measuring minimal expectations for mastery of foundational skills in reading. Indiana established policy efforts to support reading proficiency in 2010 yet several issues have persisted. Indiana's statewide performance on IREAD-3 remains idle and performance has been declining since the 2012-2013 school year and was further exacerbated by pandemic impacts.

The Cabinet recommends Indiana bolster efforts to ensure third graders can read by the end of third grade by supporting additional funding for science of reading instructional coaching implementation. This recommendation is aligned with the state's largest-ever financial investment in literacy – a combined \$111 million investment in partnership with the Lilly Endowment and the Department of Education – meant to address Indiana's urgent need to address reading proficiency.

In addition, schools should use the recommended curriculum aligned with the science of reading to ensure all students have access to this research-based literacy focus. The Cabinet recommends the Department of Education continue to

review the most successful schools (by IREAD-3 pass and ILEARN proficiency rates) to determine best practices and share findings with Indiana schools and districts.

The Cabinet also recommends offering financial incentives to schools in order to achieve Indiana's aggressive goal of having 95% of students able to read by the end of third grade by 2027. A formula should be determined to award grants to schools that are improving literacy rates, weighted based on the school's overall at-risk student populations. Schools should award the majority of this incentive funding to educators teaching students to read, as well as enhancing science of reading curriculum and resources.

The Cabinet also recommends layering in additional support and requirements for schools that have an IREAD-3 passage rate of 70% or less. This would include a requirement to implement best practices that are little cost to the school, including adopting curriculum aligned to the science of reading, deploying science of reading literacy coaches, administering the IREAD-3 assessment to second grade students and using an IDOE-approved formative assessment.

29. | AWARD “SECOND YEAR” OF COLLEGE TO HIGH SCHOOL DUAL CREDIT/CERTIFICATE COMPLETERS

To improve the K-12 to higher education to workforce transition, **the Cabinet recommends Indiana offer a jumpstart scholarship to students who complete their “first year” of college in high school, by awarding a scholarship that covers their “second year” of college.** For high school students to complete enough dual credit to complete the Indiana College Core or a one-year Career and Technical Education certificate in high school, the state would award them one-year of college tuition at one of Indiana’s higher education institutions. This would incentivize high school students to engage in dual credit as a jumpstart and proven performance will allow for forward momentum in the form of the “second year” being covered by a scholarship.

30. | ENSURE A STACKABLE CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT SYSTEM

Aligned with Indiana’s Workforce Ready Grant, many institutions including Ivy Tech Community College and Vincennes University began developing a mechanism for non-credit programs to ‘stack’ into existing credit-bearing versions of the same program. In addition, they worked quickly to restructure programs to allow industry certifications to be earned, and awarded, to students as they progress through their education program vs. at the end. This helps students when “life gets in the way” of completing an entire program, allowing them to earn and be armed with a shorter-term credential. The Cabinet recommends taking this notion a step further by scaling this effort not just within one institution, but across all public institutions.

The Cabinet recommends urgently targeting high-need sectors of Indiana’s economy to have stackable credential pathways. The Cabinet recommends that postsecondary

institutions ensure credential stackability and that students are awarded earned credentials as they complete their program. All postsecondary institutions should:

- ensure stackability of their own programs (so students earn any embedded credentials upfront versus upon completion of a program, and
- be required to collaborate in connecting various types of program offerings (e.g., short-term certificates, one-year, two-year, and four-year) so students can seamlessly transition from one program to another.

This will help students see that they can choose a path that fits them today and offers immediate benefit without limiting possibilities for their future. This system will show how they can advance their career to the next level with more education.

Governor's Workforce Cabinet Members

David Adams | Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Commissioner

Representative Bob Behning | Indiana House of Representatives

Maurice Coates Jr. | CK United Sheet Metal & Mechanical, President

Robert Coons | Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, President

Tony Denhart | Indiana Economic Development Corporation, Executive Vice President

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Megan Glover | 120WaterAudit, CEO

Joyce Irwin | Community Health Network Foundation, President/CEO

Dr. Katie Jenner | Indiana Department of Education, Secretary

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Fred Payne | United Way of Central Indiana, President and CEO

Paul Perkins | Amatrol, Inc., President

Dan Peterson | Cook Group, Vice President of Industry and Government Affairs

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Senator Jeff Raatz | Indiana State Senate

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Dr. Steve Rogers | Walker Career Center, Director

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Rebecca Schroeder | Whiteshire Hamroc, President

Dave Shane | Lacy Diversified Industries, Retired CEO

Dr. Steve Thalheimer | Elkhart Community Schools, Superintendent

Tony Vespa | Vespa Group, Founder

We thank and acknowledge the contributions of Cabinet members whose terms have recently concluded:

Jena Bellezza | Indiana Parenting Institute

Rob Carter | Indiana Department of Corrections

Anne Hazlett | Purdue University

Dr. Ron Rochon | University of Southern Indiana

GWC Executive Team | **Whitney Ertel, Fran Valentine, Liz Walker**



**GOVERNOR'S
WORKFORCE
CABINET**



GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE CABINET

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet was formed to ensure a talent-driven education and workforce system by addressing current and future needs for Indiana employers and individuals, strengthen Indiana's economy by integrating state and federal resources, and provide strategic alignment for state agencies and organizations driving workforce, education and economic development.

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet is comprised of business and community leaders, education representatives from K-12 and postsecondary institutions, Indiana lawmakers and experts from state agencies. Members are appointed by the Governor and represent Indiana's 12 economic growth regions.

The recommendations reflect the combined work of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet members and partners. Participation does not imply blanket endorsement for recommendations.